

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

October - November 2009



The richest values of wilderness lie not in the days of Daniel Boone, nor even in the present, but rather in the future

- Aldo Leopold

An early November windstorm that devastated about 15-20 acres of forest in the Cohutta Wilderness caused the Rice Camp Trail to become impassable due to some 200 blowdowns jackstrawed across the trail. While early estimates put the trail being reopened in February, Team Conasauga saw teams jumped on the blowdowns with a vengeance. Thanks to the tireless efforts of these folks, we are proud to report the trail is now open.



Amos Burrell and David Tanner working on one of the last blowdowns to be cut



A mule team was used on the last weekend to pull cut logs from the trail



October – There isn't a scheduled volunteer workday in October since this month is reserved for our annual volunteer appreciation and awards picnic. However, several volunteers contributed their time to a variety of projects. **Gene and Amy Findley** started the activity by bushhogging a section of the Pinhoti Trail with their tractor...**Fred Pilcher** was back to the John's Mountain Overlook to maintain the scenic overlook...**Jim Holland and Larry Wheat** participated in a Trail Machine/Ditch Witch training class that certifies them to operate this Forest Service equipment on trail projects...**Fred Pilcher** volunteered two days at the Pocket Recreation Area performing maintenance work and weedeating...The **Northwest GA Chapter of the Southern Off-road Bicycle Assoc. (NGSORBA)** volunteered several hours on the Pinhoti Trail in October and November in anticipation of the upcoming Snake Creek Gap Mountain Bike Time Trial event...**Rick Moon and Mike Cole** stayed busy clearing blowdowns from the Pinhoti Trail...**Wanda Brown** spent several hours over a three day period updating the volunteer and trail maintenance databases...**Mark Voykovic** had a productive day on his wilderness foot patrol to the Beech Bottom/Jacks River Falls area of the Cohutta Wilderness talking with visitors about wilderness regulations and proper Leave No Trace practices...**Rick Moon** returned to the Pinhoti Trail another day to work on some more blowdowns...**Rick and Gennie Dasinger** blazed a section of the Pinhoti Trail to ensure users can easily follow the trail...**Geri Geren and Barry Gilley** worked another section of the Pinhoti chainsawing out blowdowns...**Fred Pilcher** was back, this time at Pilcher's Pond mowing and weedeating...And, **Troy and Wanda Brown** finished the month's volunteer activities on the Hickory Ridge Trail where they spent a tough day clearing blowdowns with their crosscut saw. Volunteers contributed **128 hours** to the cause this month. Great effort, folks!

November – **Chris Hohol and Rick Moon** flagged a segment of the Pinhoti Trail...**Fred Pilcher** was back to his winning ways at the Pocket Recreation Area on a general cleanup detail...**Wayne Pattillo and Troy Brown** teamed up to begin the first of many days removing blowdowns from the Rice Camp Trail in the aftermath of a windstorm that wracked the area...**Jim Bishop, Amos Burrell, and Troy and Wanda Brown** returned to the Rice Camp Trail a few days later to resume their blowdown search and destroy mission...**Fred Pilcher** spent several hours cleaning up other people's trash at the Chestnut Mountain Shooting Range...**Melinda Towe and Junior Kyle** with **Backcountry Horsemen of North GA (BCHNG)** emptied the trash bins at the Jacks River Fields Campground and Horse Camp...**Troy Brown** hiked into the Tornado ravaged section of the Rice Camp Trail to assess the damage...Houston Valley ORV Area looked good after **Fred Pilcher** made his maintenance rounds...Using the Ballfield Group Camping Area as the base camp for Working Weekend #54, volunteers tackled heavy maintenance tasks on three wilderness trails in a 2-day project sponsored by **REI, Inc.** On day one, **Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** put their efforts into waterbar maintenance on the Conasauga River Trail below Betty Gap, while another enthusiastic team of volunteers consisting of **Amos Burrell, Nicole Warren-Miller, Jimmy Ambecon, and Troy and Wanda**



Tom Owens, Jeff Krivo and Kim Smith put the finishing touches on a water dip

Brown jumped on the waterbar maintenance needs on the Tearbitches Trail. On day two, **Wayne Pattillo, Amos Burrell and Troy and Wanda Brown** took on blowdown removal on



Vickie Davis and David Tanner team up on the Chestnut Lead Trail

the Conasauga River Trail between Betty Gap Trailhead and Chestnut Creek while a second large group made short work of the waterbar maintenance on the Chestnut Lead Trail. This hard-working bunch of volunteers counted **Jimmy Ambecon, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Karen Clark, Michael Hoover, Shannon Stevens, Eric and Dan Shelby, Richard and Ian Mansker, Jeff Krivo, Tom Owens, Kim Smith, David Tanner, Nicole Warren-Miller, Charles Gowing, Mark Risjord (scout leader) and Tucker GA Girl Scouts Kimberley Smith, Andrea Risjord, Hannah Risjord, Kathlene Stinson, Erin**

Osment, Ellen Osment, Lydia Gowing, Cheri DeBoer-Stinson, and Casey Cudmore...Troy and Wanda Brown crawled over, around and

through the tangled mess of blowdown on the Rice Camp Trail to flag the actual trail location so we would know what trees to cut...**Rick Moon and Gennie Dasinger** had a good day doing trail work on the Pinhoti Trail...**Fred Pilcher** returned to the Chestnut Mountain Range to cleanup the site...Another NGSORBA crew consisting of **Conrad Fernandez, Barry Gilley, and Bill Hester** sawed blowdowns and cleared brush on yet another section of the Pinhoti Trail...**Larry**

Wheat traveled to Dry Creek to reflag and paint the centerlines for the trails to be constructed...**Troy Brown** spent several hours sharpening a crosscut saw for use on Rice Camp Trail. Then, the next day, **Troy** and fellow sawyers **Jim Holland, Wanda Brown, and Tony and Carol Cook** spent a strenuous but successful day cutting numerous windstorm blowdowns at Rice Camp. **Troy and Wanda Brown and Tony and Carol Cook** returned the next day to continue the trail clearing effort...And, **Junior Kyle and Lakota Towe** rode the South Fork Trail and removed blowdowns. What a month November turned out to be. Team Conasauga volunteers gave **634 hours** of hard-earned sweat equity this month. That's totally awesome.



Picnics after the monthly trail workdays give us time for food and fellowship

TEAM CONASAUGA...where the difficult is done immediately and the impossible takes a little longer.



Cold weather has steamrolled its way back into Georgia and winter does not officially begin for nearly a week. The weatherman has predicted this winter to be wet and cold. Are you prepared? Let's discuss some things you can do to be ready for Old Man Winter...

- ✓ **Vehicle stocked?** Mountain roads can become treacherous in the short time from when you leave the trailhead to your return trip home. Remember to keep your vehicle stocked with blankets, extra food and water, and a flashlight in case you get stranded. Fill your gas tank while you're still in town.
- ✓ **Layered clothing?** Do you layer your clothing? You should in order to deal with the changes in weather and temperatures, especially when you're expecting some sweat equity doing trail maintenance. Avoid cotton that tends to soak up and hold moisture that leaves you wet and cold. The newer moisture-wicking fabrics together with wool or fleece will keep you dry.
- ✓ **Warm attire?** Remember to carry extra gloves, wool or fleece, in addition to your leather work gloves. Bring extra socks, particularly if you're crossing streams. Don't forget to grab a toboggan too. We lose a lot of heat from our head, hands and feet. Keep a space blanket in your pack just in case of an emergency.
- ✓ **Raingear?** If there is any chance of rain, certainly bring a rain jacket, possibly rain pants too. Raingear will help protect you from those cold, northern winds. Gaiters are also effective in keep your pants dry.
- ✓ **Extra food and water?** We burn more calories in cold weather so you'll need to keep your body fueled to deal with low temperatures. Carry more high energy foods, e.g. nuts, chocolate, and remember to drink fluids to avoid dehydration.

Know Before You Go and Stay Prepared



Sore No More

The next time you want relief from sore muscles after a hard workout, reach for agua. Adding water to your ice pack cools muscles faster than using just ice, reports a study in the Journal of Athletic Training. Subjects placed a pack of crushed ice, ice cubes, or ice cubes and water on their calf muscles for 20 minutes. The ice and water combo lowered muscle temps more than either ice-only pack. Why that matters? The colder the tissue is, the more relief you feel, says lead author Joseph Dykstra, of Calvin College. To combat soreness after a killer workout, apply an ice-water pack for 20 minutes as needed.

(Source: *Women's Health Magazine*)



LEAVE NO TRACE

Most of you understand and practice Leave No Trace techniques. For others, this may be a new concept. Either way, it is time for us to revisit this important subject in a series of Trail Talk newsletter features.



America's wildlands are diverse and beautiful. They can also be fragile. Polluted waters, displaced wildlife, eroded soils, and trampled vegetation are just some of the impacts linked directly to recreational activities. Even our mere presence has an influence. Considerable damage could be prevented or minimized if recreationists were better informed, especially about Leave No Trace techniques. Leave No Trace is best understood as an educational and ethical program, not as a set of rules and regulations.

At the heart of Leave No Trace are seven principles for reducing the damage caused by outdoor activities. They are...

- ❖ **PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE**
- ❖ **TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES**
- ❖ **DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY**
- ❖ **LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**
- ❖ **MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS**
- ❖ **RESPECT WILDLIFE**
- ❖ **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS**

In this feature, we will examine the 1st Principle:

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Adequate planning and preparation is the first step in protecting the area you will visit.

- Educate yourself. Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit. For example, the camping closure at the Beech Bottom/Jacks River Falls Area.
- Plan for your group. Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into smaller groups. In the Cohutta Wilderness, hiking groups are limited to 12 people or less and equestrian groups to 8 horses or less when travelling on a designated trail. Off trail, cross country travel is limited to 4 hikers or less per group and 3 horses per group.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Visit at midweek for a less crowded, more enjoyable experience.
- Use proper gear. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies. Equipment that keeps us safe and comfortable in a variety of conditions can also reduce impacts on our surroundings.
- Plan your meals. Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Develop the skills. Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns or flagging.

For more Leave No Trace information visit: www.lnt.org



Conasauga Lore

Winkley Mine...Just above the Jacks River along the old wagon road, now known as Hickory Ridge Trail, in a low gap on the east side of the trail is a fairly conspicuous hole approximately 3 feet deep. This was a prospecting gold mine shaft made by Frances Winkley, who also mined on Hickory Creek in the 1880s. This particular shaft was originally approximately 6 to 8 feet deep, but was not productive. The legend was that Winkley did find gold in some other location not far away but he became ill and could never go back to mine the site.

Burnt Barn...This was the site of one of the old Conasauga River Lumber Company logging camps on Rough Creek. A considerable amount of ceramic shards and old metal buckets, stove pieces, etc can be found in the flats around the burnt barn. Also located here is the largest pool on the lower half of Rough Creek. It was said that the logging camp threw leftover bread to the fish and raised huge trout in the pool, which could not easily be caught because the completely clear, smooth surface of the water allowed the trout to see the fishermen very easily and become spooked.

* Historical information provided by Shepherd L. Howell



MOUNTAIN BIKERS CONVERGE ON PINHOTI TRAIL

Mountain bikers from all over the country will be converging on the Pinhoti Trail soon to compete in timed race events sponsored by the Northwest GA Chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association. On the first Saturday in January (2nd), February (6th), and March (6th), up to 300 riders will be vying for glory at the 6th annual Snake Creek Gap Time Trial Series. The trials include a 34-mile race that starts at the Dry Creek Trailhead and a 17-mile route that begins at the Highway 136 Pinhoti Trailhead, with both courses ending at Dug Gap Mountain. Due to its extremely challenging nature, the course has been named as an “elite course” by the International Mountain Biking Association, one of only 50 such courses in the United States and Canada. The general public is asked to refrain from using the Pinhoti Trail between Dry Creek Trailhead and Dug Gap Mountain on the three race days.

CONASAUGA BITS AND PIECES

- **Top Gun Awards.** Bob and Mary Korch were not named in the August – September Trail Talk issue as 2009 Top Gun Award winners. We apologize for the omission.
- **Southern Region Volunteers Top the Nation.** Once again, Forest Service volunteers in the southeast lead the country in terms of the number of hours contributed with over 700,000 total hours in FY 2009. Within the Region, volunteer hours are up 28% over last year. These hours equate to \$14,085,659 of appraised value and 395.88 person years.
- **Grassy Mountain Gates Closing January 4th.** Due to freezing and thawing conditions that occur at high elevations in our area, roadways can become dangerous to travel and more likely to sustain damage. For public safety and resource protection, Grassy Mountain roads will be closed from January 4th to about the first of March. Gates will be closed at the following locations: 1) Forest Road 17, south of Forest Road 630, 2) Forest Road 68, west of the private property on Potato Patch Mountain, near its intersection with Forest Road 64, 3) Forest Road 64 at Potato Patch Mountain, and 4) Forest Road 64, west of the Jacks River Fields Campground. The temporary closure will bar access to the upper Tearbritches, Emery Creek, Chestnut Lead, Betty Gap and 3-Forks Trailheads.
- **Photos Needed.** Do you have a photo of our beautiful scenery, wildlife, or volunteers in action or at leisure that you would like to share? Please send a copy to us for possible inclusion in the newsletter. We'd sure appreciate it.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- **January 16** **Revised:** Rice Camp (multi-use) Trail. Water bar maintenance and new construction, minor reroute. Meet at Rice Camp Trailhead at 9AM. Equestrians needed.
- **February 19-20** Working Weekend #55, Beech Bottom (multi-use) Trail – water bar maintenance. Car camping at the Cottonwood Patch Campground.
- **March 20** To be announced
- **April 17** To be announced

Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle smaller projects.

If you are interested, please contact Ed at 706-695-6736 x 118 or e-mail elang@fs.fed.us.

As we approach the end of another year, it is a time of reflection not only on our accomplishments but what is truly important in our lives. What you are doing to maintain the quality of our trails and to protect the resources of our National Forests is important work not only to the Forest Service but to all who have a love for the outdoors. Please know that your service and support is very much appreciated.

*Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year*

